

Facts, effects

At the Siemens headquarters in Munich, they are working on something new. Rather than strenuously maintaining an overview of tangled conveyor belts on the factory floor, you just attach microphones around the space, and listen for the resonances of the metal frames holding everything in place. With accurate measurements and deep knowledge of metals, you then simply simulate everything, to know how it should sound when all is going as intended. If the hum is off, something is out of whack. You build an operative image, and then measure reality against it. This is nothing new, this is how buildings are erected, how the soccer ball stays within the field, and this is how people know where to go in the morning.

This will not work. I've seen how things flattened to the thickness of a pancake will jump back into their form, how coyotes only fall down once they notice there is nothing underfoot. I know it to be true that you make a hole shaped like yourself when you run through a wall. You cannot measure reality against an image because the image isn't stable, it's bendy and gooey, it changes when you put it next to something new.

Still, an operative image can carve a hole in the ground, it can destabilise the global economy. This may be important because the image, the narrative, is not arbitrary. Narratives seem to follow recurring forms, stories retold will start to find a common rhythm. They sort the world, they make sense of it. Cartoons follow the laws of physics unless it's funnier otherwise. I find it very difficult to meet the world without an image already in my head. I know the colours of the real, dusty whites and streaks of bright orange. A blur between frames may mix in deep greens. Any trembling of the hand of the videographer is an expression of emotion, a disclosure of themselves.

The reporter on site (who happens to also be named Donald, but bears no relation) grabs the microphone. He is determined to report the events coolly, without imparting them with sentiment. He strings words together, and at once the audience feel the quality of the light, and the roughness of the air where he is. With each pause, with each Aa or O stating nothing but first-hand truths, he creates a surplus. The bright glare from behind his teeth is tripled in the camera lens. It pans away.